

# U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY DESIGNATION OF SOLE SOURCE AQUIFERS

## FACT SHEET

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### **What is a Sole Source Aquifer?**

A Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) is an aquifer designated by EPA as the "sole or principal source" of drinking water for a given service area; that is, an aquifer which is needed to supply 50% or more of the drinking water for that area and for which there are no reasonably available alternative sources should the aquifer become contaminated.

### **What are the benefits of designation as a Sole Source Aquifer?**

Proposed Federal financially-assisted projects which have the potential to contaminate the SSA area will be subject to EPA review. This review could either prevent a commitment of Federal funding or cause a redesign of the project. Designation has no effect on proposed projects which do not receive Federal financial assistance such as projects funded by State, local or private concerns.

### **Who may apply for Sole Source Aquifer designation?**

Any person may apply for SSA designation. A "person" is any individual, corporation, company, association, partnership, State, municipality or Federal agency. The petition should be submitted to the EPA Regional Administrator.

### **What should be included in the Sole Source Aquifer petition?**

The petition should include sufficient technical information to allow EPA to determine whether the aquifer is the sole or principal source of drinking water and to substantiate the boundaries of the aquifer and its recharge area. The petitioner is responsible for providing the hydrogeological and other information needed for designation. The information which must be submitted in the petition is described in the Sole Source Aquifer Designation Petitioner Guidance available from the Regional Office.

### **What are the steps in processing a Sole Source Aquifer designation petition?**

There are four phases in making a designation decision:

- Petition Preparation (Petitioner)
- Initial Review/Completeness Determination (EPA)
- Detailed Review/Technical Verification (EPA)
- Designation Determination (EPA)

### **How long does the designation decision process take?**

The designation process generally takes a minimum of six months from the time the petitioner submits a complete petition to the time EPA makes a determination. The process may take longer, depending on the complexity of the petition.